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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2989
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0807
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0681
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1257
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN MISSES POLISH NATIONAL DAY

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (U) Polish Ambassador Maciej Lang hosted a reception in Ashgabat on November 19 in honor of Poland's National Day. Standard practice for national day receptions in Ashgabat is for both Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Meredov and Speaker of the Parliament Nuberdiyeva to represent the Government of Turkmenistan, and Meredov makes appropriate comments.

13. (SBU) For Poland's national day reception, no Turkmenistani official showed up, which old-timers said has happened only once before at national days in the last two years. Everyone understandingly clucked that President Berdimuhamedov is running almost daily marathon cabinet meetings. And besides that, obviously the host government is totally consumed with preparations and swarming advance teams for the CIS Heads of Government Summit on November 22. Well, maybe.

14. (U) The following ambassadors were seated at the Polish Ambassador's head table: United States, Russia, Germany, OSCE, UAE, Georgia, Ukraine. The dinner conversation was appropriately light, equally in Russian and in English, and substantive on safe issues like Turkmenistan's exchange-rate drama and the soon-to-open UN Center for Preventative Diplomacy.

15. (U) Russian Ambassador Blatov excused himself as soon as he politely could, saying he had to go make ready for Prime Minister Zubkov's visit.

16. (SBU) Ukrainian Ambassador Mayko then turned to Polish Ambassador Lang and asked ironically, "So tell us, Maciej, how are Polish-Russian relations?" Answer? (Expletive deleted!) Georgian Ambassador Petriashvili asked, "Hey Maciej, can you sell your meat to Russia yet? We still can't sell our wine." Response? (Expletive deleted!)

¶7. (SBU) After more rude banter, the consensus was that the Resurgent Russian Bear is increasingly baring its fangs and claws in its self-proclaimed "sphere of influence" -- and, in doing so, is driving away all but the weakest or most clueless. In the second category, European and FSU consensus, whether accurately or not, places Turkmenistan.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: There is a European knee-jerk reaction in Ashgabat that Russia is increasingly calling the shots behind the scenes -- not in a take-control way, but quietly through Turkmen sympathizers in small ways carefully calculated to irritate the international community. We suspect, so far, this is the easy descent into false coincidence and conspiracy thinking, and would prefer to reserve judgment to see if credible evidence emerges. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND